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ABSTRACT

Written for the layperson, this books presents perspectives in support of cultural diversity in America and against language restrictionism and establishment of English as the single official language. In a series of topical discussions, the book brings what linguists have learned about language acquisition to the issue of how the United States should address the language needs of its population. Chapters focus on the following topics: the role of language in connecting individuals and groups together; the symbolism of the American melting-pot myth and the way it colors Americans' expectations of immigrants and attitudes about the languages they bring with them; common misconceptions about newcomers and language learning; the role of language as means of instruction and subject of study in American schools; the history and nature of the official-English movement; the history of challenges to the language restrictionism movement; examples of one-language and officially bilingual or multilingual nations; and benefits of cultural diversity and multilingualism. Contains 307 references. (MSE)

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